

Spas of Italy Have Message of Hope for Americans

By JOHN STEINBECK

SOMEWHERE In Italy.—I have before me a pamphlet which should carry unbounded pleasure to otherwise healthy Americans searching for a comfortable and expensive illness to fill in the time between Labor Day and Thanksgiving. The booklet is called "The Spas of Italy," and brings a message of hope for many of my retired and solvent countrymen.

In our thrice-blessed country, a man, while he is building his fortune, has no time for the pleasures of illness. Only after his work is done and his stock certificates rest in the sweet, cool darkness of the safe-deposit vault can he relax happily in a clinic with barium and catheter, while his wife, once tough as a boot and strong as a horse, both of which she now resembles, languishes under the curative hands of beauticians.

To these fortunate souls I bring good news from the beautifully illustrated booklet

on Italian spas. It lists 84 springs, wells, baths and mud holes.

One Thing In Common

Many of these centers of regeneration have been known since the ancient days of Rome. All have one thing in common—they are expensive.

"Every kind of mineral water is represented in Italy," the booklet begins. "Lightly mineralized water (also called Oligomineral), muriated waters, simple or containing iodine and bromine, sulphur waters, the whole gamut of alkaline waters, chalybeate and arsenical waters, strongly radioactive waters. The hydromineral treatment in the Italian thermae includes drinking, baths and inhalations, to which are to be added muds and vapor baths, in natural and artificial grottoes and hot chambers—"

You can't beat that for poetry to a successful man who, after a lifetime of work and martinis, feels that he owes something to his community in the way of obscure illness.

Diseases Noted

"These various means of hydromineral treatment are beneficial to a great number of diseases affecting every part of the body . . .

"Finally the inexhaustible therapeutic opportunities offered by the Italian healing waters enhanced by the unequalled beauty of the landscape, the benefits of the climate, the comfort and convenience of the sojourn so

that even now as in the old days it may be said, 'UBI THERMAE, IBI SALUS!'"

Here it is across the board. Each spa is listed with its waters, its treatment, its hotels and its therapeutic directions. Let us take a sampling. Get ready to feel your mouth beginning to water!

There is the Abano Therma in Padua. Its waters are muriated and contain bromine and iodine and there is vegeto-mineral mud. The hotels are magnificent, with a doctor on every floor. Abano goes to work on rheumatism, arthritis, stiffness, weakness, limitation of movement following distortions, strains, dislocations, fractures and other traumatisms and chronic catarrh of the respiratory or-

heit, but it also offers muds and molds and gelatinous protophyte masses vegetating on rocky levels where thermal water is kept running which may be applied instead of mud."

And there are "caves dug into the rocks and saturated with the vapors given forth by the running mineral waters. Here you use both mud and mold packs."

I'm going to dream about those "gelatinous protophyte masses vegetating on rocky

levels." Why can't we have stuff like that in America?

I have never been a guest at one of these disposal plants, but I have lots of friends who go regularly every time the Grim Reaper and a hangover get into cahoots. For two weeks they wallow around in the mud, happy as shoats in a meadow bottom on a hot afternoon.

They're so busy drinking the stuff and plastering it on themselves and washing it off that they don't have either

the time or the pitcher of martinis. end of two weeks they clean the under their fingers. sure enough, they

It's better and expensive than hunting and running liquor, and they can't do it all winter to their privileged neighbors. they're getting sick next season.

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Customer Sits

The customer just sits in vegeto-mineral mud and all those things happen. Then there is Bagni di Chiatamone in Campania. It wrestles with primary and secondary anemia, exhaustion after overwork and the like.

Bagni di Lucca in Tuscany handles neuralgia, neuritis, gout, obesity, complaints of the liver and bile ducts, of the stomach and intestine and skin diseases. There are five hotels. No one in a decent income bracket lacks for at least two of these complaints.

But for pure originality and thrill consider Bagni di Vinadio in Piedmont. Here one has "hot sulphur springs from 15 to 126 degrees Fahrenheit."